



City of El Paso – Historic Landmark Commission Staff Report

Case No: PZRZ11-00028
Application Type: Rezoning-Historic Overlay Designation
CPC Hearing Date: July 28, 2011
Staff Planner: Tony De La Cruz, 915-541-4329, delacruzja@elpasotexas.gov

Location: 2851 Grant Avenue
Legal Description: A 1.174 Acre (51,124 S.F.) Tract of land being all of Lots 1 thru 9, all of Lots 48 Thru 52, all of Lot 14, a portion of Lots 10, 11, 12, 13 and 47, and a portion of a vacated alley all within Block I, Alamo Heights Addition, City of El Paso, El Paso County, Texas

Acreage: 1.174 Acres
Rep District: 2
Existing Use: School
Request: R-4 (Residential) to R-4/H (Residential /Historic Overlay)

Proposed Use: School

Property Owner: El Paso Independent School District
Representative: City of El Paso/Planning & Economic Development Department

SURROUNDING ZONING AND LAND USE

North: R-3/H (Residential /Historic) Residential
South: A-2 (Apartment) Residential
East: R-3/H (Residential /Historic) Residential
West: A-2 (Apartment) Residential

THE PLAN FOR EL PASO DESIGNATION: Residential (Central Planning Area)

NEAREST PARK: Memorial Park (1409 Feet)

NEAREST SCHOOL: Houston School of Choice (0 Feet)

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS

El Paso Central Business Association

NEIGHBORHOOD INPUT

Notice of the public meeting was mailed out to all property owners within 300 feet of the subject property on June 20, 2011. The Planning Division has not received any letters or phone calls in favor or in opposition of the rezoning request.

CASE HISTORY

On July 27, 2010, the El Paso City Council approved and authorized a City-initiated rezoning application and allocation of City funds for the preparation of a Detailed Site Plan and related documents to change the zoning of the property from R-4 (Residential) to R-4/H (Residential /Historic Overlay).

APPLICATION DESCRIPTION

The City of El Paso is requesting to change the zoning of the property from R-4 (Residential) to R-4/H (Residential /Historic Overlay). in order to preserve the historic character of the Houston School building and the Manhattan Heights Neighborhood. The property is 1.174 acres in size and functions as

a school. The landmark portion of the school was built in 1922 and designed by the architectural firm of Trost and Trost.

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

On July 11, 2011, the HLC recommended **approval** of the rezoning request from R-4 (Residential) to R-4/H (Residential /Historic Overlay).

DEVELOPMENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE REVIEW

The DCC reviewed and discussed the application for rezoning and offered no objections to Planning Staff's recommendation for approval.

PLANNING DIVISION RECOMMENDATION

The Planning Division recommends **approval** of the rezoning request from R-4 (Residential) to R-4/H (Residential /Historic Overlay).

The Plan for El Paso –City-wide Land Use Goals

All applications for rezoning shall demonstrate compliance with the following criteria:

- a. Goal: Preserve, protect and enhance the integrity, economic vitality and livability of the City's neighborhoods.
- b. Goal: Provide and enforce standards for providing decent, safe and sanitary housing for all El Pasoans in accordance with Federal, State and Local regulations.
- c. Goal: Promote preservation and conservation of historic districts and areas with a historic character by focusing these efforts in retaining the character and integrity of these areas and surrounding neighborhoods.

The application is in compliance with the Plan for El Paso – City-wide Land Use Goals. The purpose of the R-4/H (Residential /Historic) is to safeguard the city's historic and cultural heritage, as embodied and reflected in such historic landmarks by appropriate regulations. It is intended to prevent the uprooting of architectural products of distinct periods, which may occur without regard to the feasibility of preserving and continuing the use of such landmarks, and without consideration of the irreplaceable loss to the people of the city of the cultural, historic and aesthetic values represented by such landmarks.

Planning & Economic Development Department – Historic Preservation Division:

Historic Preservation Section: Recommends **APPROVAL** of the request to rezone from R-4 (Residential) to R-4/H (Residential /Historic Overlay) based on the following criteria.

Houston Elementary, designed by the architectural firm of Trost & Trost in 1922, is located at the Northwest corner at the intersection of Grant Avenue and Elm Streets, directly to the south and adjacent to the locally designated Manhattan Heights National Register District. The three story, six bay, red brick building faces Grant Avenue and was constructed by noted builder Vernon E. Ware, who also constructed the Haymon Krupp Building, the first building at UTEP, and the extension of the New Mexico State Capitol building. All were designed by Trost and Trost.

Criteria D: Identification as the work of an architect or master builder whose individual work has influenced the development of the city;

Henry C. Trost was born in 1860 in Toledo, Ohio. After graduating high school he began his career as an architectural draftsman at the age of seventeen. In 1880 he moved to Denver, Colorado and shortly thereafter he developed an architectural firm with Frank Weston. In his early career Mr. Trost

worked throughout the Southwest in addition to Fort Worth, New Orleans, and Pueblo, Colorado. Upon his return to Chicago in 1888 he became a member of the Chicago Architectural Sketch Club which acted as an architectural school. The move to Chicago allowed Trost to be influenced by the notable architects of the time such as Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright. Trost arrived in El Paso in the early 1900s where he started the firm of Trost and Trost with his brother Gustavus Adolphus Trost.

Trost achieved a high level of success in El Paso becoming the most sought after and prolific architect of the city. He designed for a variety of private and public clients such as Anson Mills, O.T. Bassett and the El Paso Independent School District. Trost was able to use his talent to design several buildings in a variety of architectural styles from elaborate to modest. Some of his most notable El Paso commissions were the Mills Building, the Bassett Tower, the Cortez Building and El Paso High School. Houston Elementary was designed by the firm in 1922 as a three story masonry, symmetrical, fire-proof structure with quoins to emphasize its verticality and a center concrete bay with an ornamental parapet over the entrance. At the time of its construction the City Beautiful movement was influencing new construction throughout the country by incorporating symmetrical, classical buildings as seen in the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago in an effort to promote a harmonious social order that would increase the quality of life.

Criteria I. Exemplification of the cultural, economic, social, ethnic or historical heritage of the city, state or the United States;

Houston Elementary was originally named Austin School to commemorate the life of Stephen F. Austin, the founder of the Republic of Texas and the first Secretary of State. Due to an increase in population and overcrowded conditions at the school Mrs. E.A. Jennings, the president of the Austin Junior High P.T.A., asked that a new high school be built in the Five Points district. In 1919 authorization was given by the school board to purchase land in east El Paso for the purpose of constructing the new high school that would be named Austin High School and the Trost designed building was renamed Houston Elementary. The school opened in September 1922 and consisted of three stories, twenty-four classrooms, and a public library.

Houston Elementary had an important cultural and social impact on the City of El Paso by incorporating the first branch of the El Paso Public library located within a school building. The library did not serve just the school but the residents of the Five Points area. It was the first of what was intended to be a chain of public library branches housed in local schools. The public school branch library was part of the philosophy of a free public education for children and access to a general repository of knowledge for the general public. The library was created to meet the needs and demands for information, knowledge and education for the El Paso population. This branch library, as the first of its kind in the city, was available to all, regardless of age, skill level, or ability to pay. By placing a branch of the library within the school, the city was able to save the expense of building another building to house the repository and made it safe and accessible for younger children who did not have to leave the building to go to the library.

Engineering & Construction Management Department - Building Permits and Inspections

No objections to proposed rezoning.

Engineering & Construction Management Department – Land Development

No objections to proposed rezoning.

Planning & Economic Development – Planning Division

Current Planning: Recommends **APPROVAL** of the rezoning request from R-4 (Residential) to R-4/H (Residential /Historic).

Engineering Department - Traffic Division

No objection to proposed rezoning.

El Paso Fire Department

No objections to rezoning.

El Paso Water Utilities

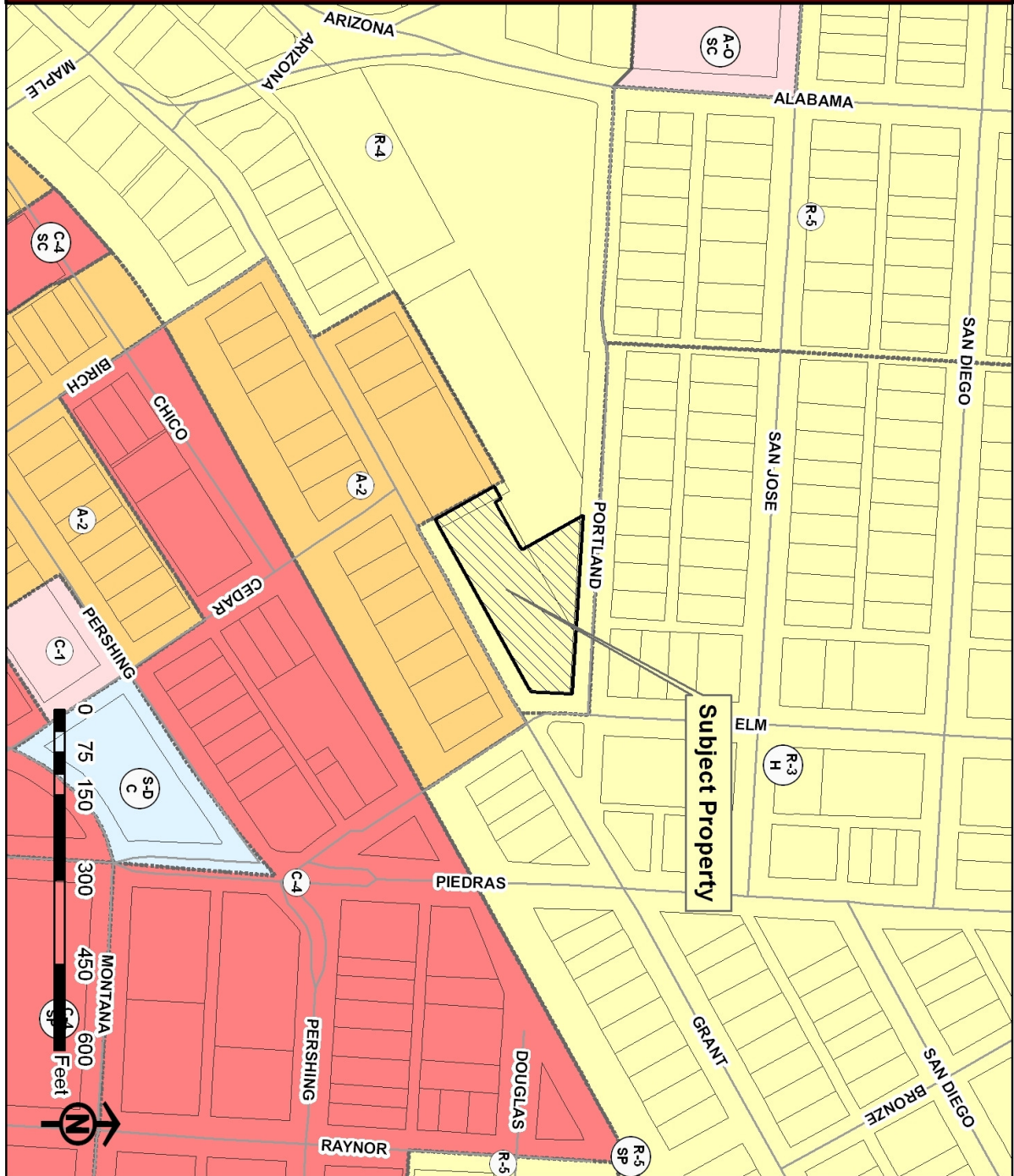
EPWU does not object to this request.

El Paso Police Department

No objections to rezoning.

ATTACHMENT 1: ZONING MAP

PZRZ11-00028



ATTACHMENT 2: AERIAL MAP

PZRZ11-00028



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ATTACHMENT 4: TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION LETTER

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
real places telling real stories

May 26, 2011

Providencia Velázquez
Historic Preservation Officer
City of El Paso
Planning & Economic Development
2 Civic Center Plaza
El Paso, Texas 79901

RE: Houston School, 2951 Grant Avenue, El Paso, El Paso County, Texas

Dear Ms. Velázquez:

Thank you for your interest in preserving the Houston School in El Paso. Designed by the noted El Paso firm of Trost and Trost, and built in 1922, the building retains a good degree of integrity and is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C in the area of Architecture, at the local level of significance. Due to its immediate proximity to the Manhattan Heights Historic District (NRHP 1980), the building may also be nominated as a contributing property in an expanded district.

Although there are no state or federal restrictions inherent with National Register listing, recognition of a property's historic significance can often lead to its future preservation. National Register listing could qualify a building for a 20% investment tax credit if the property is rehabilitated for commercial use following the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Additionally, our staff in the Division of Architecture could provide technical assistance for any work on the building.

We appreciate your efforts to document and preserve this historic property. If you have any questions, you may contact me at 512/463-6013 or by email at greg.smith@thc.state.tx.us. Thank you for your interest in the National Register and in preserving Texas' cultural heritage.

Sincerely,



Gregory W. Smith
National Register Coordinator



RICK PERRY, GOVERNOR • JON T. HANSEN, CHAIRMAN • MARK WOLFE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
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